Swaying Tree Tops

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SWAYING TREE TOPS

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BY
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" The very quietness of nature is gradually withdrawn from us; thousands who once in their necessarily prolonged travel were subjected to an influence, from the silent sky and slumbering fields, more effectual than known or confessed, now bear with them even there the ceaseless fever of their life; and along the iron veins that traverse the frame of our country, beat and flow the fiery pulses of its exertion, hotter and faster every hour. All vitality is concentrated through those throbbing arteries into the central cities; the country is passed over like a green sea by narrow bridges, and we are thrown back in continually closer crowds upon the city gates."

—Ruskin, *in "Seven Lamps of Architecture."*

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April in the Heart

I BEGIN these fancies at the time of year when the buds are first seen. They are clinging to the twigs with their baby hands crowding each other as though they were afraid they might fall off. Selfishness is life, I guess; anyhow it is in buds. To-day there is no wind, and I think the buds are holding on with one hand and resting the other hand and arm, as I have seen boys do after carrying a heavy burden, swinging their arms to ease the ache.

To have been strenuous I should have begun with the tree tops in

winter, but I do not like winter, and if the Turks want another calendar I will arrange one for them without any winter. Those who have blood that is nine-tenths iron enjoy winter, at least they say they do. Those who have iron that is nine-tenths blood prefer summer. I am a blooded individual, speaking of myself as I do of a nut when I call it meaty. Shut in by winter's rain and cold, I dream all the time about the spring, and imagine the soft breezes and the languorous mood when peaches bloom and roses scent the air. If there is anything finer than a spring day when sunshine floods the valley and the warming earth sends up its odors through the brush and along the tree trunks, and finally out where

the buds cling to the tree tops, it certainly is not found during the winter, but possibly later in the spring, or in the summer, or autumn.

There are two harbingers of spring. One is a girl newly gowned, with a bunch of violets at her waist. The other is the note of the robin. They come close together. Sometimes the girl with the violets is first —again it is the robin. This year they were just six days apart, and the robin beat the girl. The first note of the robin! How fresh and new it is! It sounds like the first strawberries taste. After weeks of shut windows, and furnace fires, and house air, to hear the robin call outside is an experience from which words run away.

The robin looks in on us for the first time in the morning. That is when I best like to have him come. He turns up all at once. I am not thinking of him at all, when suddenly I hear him call. If anyone may be pardoned for interrupting himself at his prayers, I think it is when robin calls. I like to think that he has been traveling all night, and early in the morning drops his grip on my doorstep, and calls out, "Here!" "Here!" "Spring!" "Spring!" He who made the birds did put such meaning into one note. I understand how the "come forth" at the tomb of Lazarus awakened the sleeper. He who made the robin's call could easily charge his own voice with persuasive power. The first

spring bird's note is a resurrecting voice, and many stones are rolled away from tiny sepulchers, and grass and flower come out to new life.

An Evening Silhouette

Three days after robin dropped his grip and said he was at his journey's end, a thunderstorm broke at intervals all day along the hillside. Just at sunset the clouds cleared enough to tell me where west was. There is a light that comes upon the rain-drenched landscape at sunset which is quite different than that of any other hour of all days. It is different because it changes every object, and gives even the ugliest some claim to attractiveness. The last light of day is tinted. White light is a revealer—tinted light is a concealer. If one could stay in a tinted light always he would be passably respectable. The

best that he can do, however, is to get through the white light of midday as he can, trusting that the sunset will be generous.

Before the thunderstorm some days ago the hills were brown, but a few hours wrought their transformation and at evening they were lying drenched with green. The topmost twigs of maple and sycamore had turned color in the few hours, apparent preparation for some real work next day in bud development.

The wet sidewalk—the pools along the way—the green hillside—the bare trees with their prophetic tints —were all enveloped in the afterglow of the sunset, and had the unreality which a scene has when you view it with inverted head. It

was an hour when I could not say spring had come, for I was not sure winter had gone, but I felt that one was coming nearer every moment, and the other departing. On the highest bough of the tallest tree, robin was silhouetted against the evening sky. If ever robin throws back his shoulders and his head and stands erect, it is at evening when he finds the tallest tree. During the day he is often on the grass, or in a bush, or on a fencepost, or half way up a tree; but at evening nothing satisfies him but a tree top. I think I know why he takes the lofty perch. He is curious about next day, and goes up into the tree top to get a view of the morrow. So as I walked out the other evening robin told me by his song

that next day would be first day of real spring. He threw down to me a few notes of song which were hints of what he saw coming. He said the trees would soon be in leaf, the air warmer, the twilight longer, and having given me that much of his tree-top vision, he fell to talking to himself less distinctly as the dark drew near. He sang a little song as though he were practicing a tree-top lullaby for future use, and seemed half ashamed.

The tint of the west faded, the air grew damp and cold, the clouds gathered across the sky, and I wondered if robin really saw what he told me.

The Listening of the Robin

Now and again we hear words about vision power. The desire for vision is nothing new. Isaiah talked about it, and said vision had become as the words of a book that was sealed. I think it was unfortunate that he called it a sealed book. It brought in the thought of study and musty pages, and close application to line and word and letter in order to gain it. I wonder if that has not been our trouble all along—we have thought vision was a complex state of thought, something to be gained by hard labor—a travail of soul, then vision. A strenuous life will develop

a materialist, but it will not develop vision in anyone. He who desireth vision power must out of doors listen and look. We have thought that these words of the Hebrew seer were easily comprehended. Not one in a hundred has understood them. "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Vision—vision—what is it? It is sensing things, that is all. It is the simplest thing in all the world. That is why, talking so much about finding it, we never get it. That is why we find it not in the cañon of city streets, but in the cañon of the mountains; not where switch engines

screech and puff, but where shadows play across the meadows.

Vision being simple sensing, the bird out yonder in the sunlight has it, and every note of song or conversation is its effort to reveal the spring. Birds do not always sing, but sometimes talk, and the reason their talk is musical is because they speak of the same things of which they sing.

I hope robin will forgive me for doubting what he told me the other night after the storm. He knew the spring was here. He sensed it in the tree top. I stood down in the mud, that was my trouble. This morning, which is the realest spring morning yet, is vindication of the robin. Poor mortal that I am—my view in the

mud did not give me this morning. It is robin's morning, because he went into the tree top.

You might think that being able to see so much up there robin would be vain and never come back to earth again. That would be the way with me. Not so robin. I just saw him out in the grass, standing quietly listening to hear it grow (or was he waiting for a worm). What joy it gives him! Listening—listening all the time—everywhere! Robin is very near to the heart of things these days. Robin hath vision.

The Other Harbinger

It was six days after robin came that the girl with the violets at her waist came across my path. She is the other harbinger of spring. I presume it is the same stirring in the heart that brings out the girl with the violets, that brings robin toward the north. It is a virgin sense. In the spring a girl is just herself. She and the season are one. Both are sweet, pleasant to the eyes, and they make the blood flow faster. A girl in furs may be beautiful, but a girl in some light stuff, with violets, is more than beautiful, just as plum trees in blossom outrank plum trees covered with snow.

There are those, mostly men and

women who do not know, who say, "The girl's desire for hat and gown in springtime is a sign of vanity and frivolity." If that be so, praises be to vanity and frivolity. But it is not vanity, neither frivolity. Might as well call the first spring flowers that I saw the other day vain for putting on their best and newest garb. When the south wind began to blow occasionally, or rather when the cold winds did not blow, the flowers came out. They could not help it. So with that girl with her violets: when the chill of winter began to leave she appeared.

There are two occasions when virtue comes out in our lives. One is when the cold winds cease—the other is when the warm winds blow. In the

first it is the result of the life within that, when the hostilities are taken away, bursts into blossom. In the second it is the result of the coaxing, the alluring of a pleasing environment. May we not think that the virtue which is the blossom of the life within is the choicer and the more desirable? But then who cares to limit our opportunities for being virtuous? If we do not respond when hostilities cease, let us not fail when the south wind blows.

She who makes her appearance in spring, new with ribbon and cloth and flower, hath a mission. I hope she realizes it. I have seen a street-car full of the remnants of the winter perceptibly brighten at the entrance of the spring girl. The conductor

came out of his stolid indifference, and even reached out a hand to help her up the step. It was the involuntary recognition of the new and fresh. The man whose foot was underneath another man's foot when the conductor played "jerk" with the current, swallowed his swear when he caught sight of her. Again along the crowded street, where men and women hurried, jostling each other, some weary with the day's toil, others weary with hours of shopping—the spring girl has suddenly appeared, whence no one knew. Like the robin, she dropped on the tired crowd without a warning save the odor of her violets. She seemed to be from another sphere. Her freshness and cleanliness were not a

part of that smoky, dusty street. Along it she went as a thing foreign to it—condescending to give it the transforming influence of her presence for a moment. The banana man forgot his cry to gaze after her. The newsy said with reverence, "Gee! look at her"; and the dark woman in the red jacket, with the green birds, forgot to help her biggest bird to the top of the cage and let him clamber up alone, whilst she took a longer look after the vision of the spring. It must be hard to see this much of spring, to get just this hint of what it is like, and then never see more. But those who never get beyond the city streets are thankful, no doubt, for the little. The girl with her violets hath a mission.

Pear-tree Wisdom

Here is a morning when the June sunlight drops upon the trees, penetrates no further than a foot into their deep shadiness, then resigns itself to flooding all the open spaces, leaving the shadows to their own dark ways. The season has come on thus far, and I cannot think where the weeks have gone since first I heard the robin's note. He no longer has that prophetic call, but his note has taken on maturity, and sounds as though ripe cherries had effected a transformation in it. The apples and pears and peaches have done with their pink-and-white finery, and have settled down to labor in their com-

mon green. Their cheeks puff out, and they are dark in the face as they blow with all their might into the fruit that hangs on the end of their stems.

There is no power that could blow a pear out into real pear size and shape but a pear tree. It is a wonderful process, but how regular—natural—quiet. When man blows a glass bottle he makes smoke, noise, dust, odor, and irregular hours of labor. It is all artificial, and tears down human strength. The pear tree's work is natural, and builds up.

Much of what we boast to be civilization is exactly the opposite. Those labors in life that interfere with natural, healthly development should not be called civilization, or if so

called, let civilization be defined as unnatural—barbarism.

I am told that great industries are necessary; that great wheels which catch men now and then and kill them quickly, or if they do not catch them by accident at any rate kill them by degrees, must revolve night and day. Poor, deluded folk are they who tell me this. Must revolve! Who says so? The needs of men. Bah! Man was just as happy, vastly more healthy, when he rowed across the river in a hollowed log, or swam across, than now when he crosses in a palace car on a steel trestle.

But mind must be developed; all the progress called civilization denotes developed mind. Does it? In the aggregate far from it. One

man's mind develops as he devises a machine. An hundred men's minds are enslaved by the toil and unnatural conditions of life while the patented thing is made into wood or steel.

It is a far cry from the pear tree to the factory. The one is natural and healthy; the other is unnatural and diseased. The one is life; the other is death. The one tends upward in influence; the other tends downward. The one leads toward the spiritual; the other leads toward the material.

Twenty-fold

Like a great many birds, the robin has something to say in the morning and again at nightfall, but the midday hours are quiet so far as his voice is concerned. My curiosity as to his doings while so quiet has just been answered. I just now saw him within the deep green of a locust tree, sitting on a limb, as motionless as though carved from the wood. Robin is not an owl in his midday habits. Though motionless as I see him, he is not asleep. He will not remain on that locust bough long, but while he remains he will take his view calmly and quietly. Some nervous birds go

hopping about continually, flirting tail or wings, unable to spend a quiet moment. Robin is self-controlled, and though unheard, he is making observations. When he flies he knows where he intends to go. Always is this certainty attained as a result of self-control.

Does human life lack the vigor of certainty? May we not say that it has come to this condition through purposeless activity—the lack of the midday observation hours—the hours of control? I am convinced that man needs above all things to observe and to think. The tendency to-day is to "do" things, in the sense of seeing hurriedly, of getting over so much territory before the time limit expires on the ticket. This is done instead

of getting all that any one scene has to say before going to the next.

It is June now, and thousands of summer folk are crossing each other's paths, "touring" on limited tickets. This touring is the cause of nervous disorder. Nine out of ten of these touring folk will return home, full to the brim of bits of sight seeing that will help them not at all, for they will have seen nothing completely.

A few weeks ago I loitered for the fifteenth or twentieth time on a mountain top that always is beautiful to me. I recollect no time when on that mountain that I have not seen a few tourists "taking it in." I have always watched them with a sense of pity that they were there only to go away and not have seen

the mountain at all. They clamber up the rocky steps, they stand five minutes on the point, they read an inscription or two about the battle-field, then they consult their time-pieces and rush to the car that takes them to their train. Later in some other part of the country they will tell how they "saw" the mountain, while in reality they have not seen it. They do not see who thus "do" things.

If it be twenty times that I have tramped the mountain side and summit, it is twenty fold that I have seen of sky, and shadow, and valley, and distant blue ridge of hills. I sit on sunset rock and look at the tree-covered slope which falls rapidly a thousand and a half of feet and

then runs out in the level of the valley for a mile or more, breaks into rolling hills, and mounts the other side as precipitously as it falls away below me. In the mornings, looking at this view, a sense of the delightful freshness of the unspoiled, because untouched, vale and mountain comes upon me. Looking later, when the sun's rays are direct, and the purple haze has deepened in the cañon, the intense quiet of the hour dispels my morning haste, and I am content to lie tranquilly with half-closed eyes, dreaming that what I see is a forelook at one of those beautiful, heavenly valleys that God shall show me, perhaps, in the aftertime. Looking thus on a summer noonday at a haze-flooded valley, the real and the

unreal are so intermingled that I cannot tell their differences. I will not be positive that that is real smoke from a cabin chimney yonder on Raccoon's side. Perhaps the note of a cowbell, as its wearer, lying in the shade below, brushes the flies from her back, is only my fancying.

A cloud covers the sun. The shadows thicken into one, and I find that in an instant the real stands out to meet me in its evening mood. While I have been dreaming the hours have passed, and the cooler breeze of evening comes along the mountain crest. I have seen but one view. It has taken a half day. I drop down the steep path to a spring which blows its coolness from a mountain crevice. I have been here before

—others, too. Now as I come I am aware of someone filling a bucket. It is a girl. She has not seen me, nor heard. The aisles of the forest are carpeted for trespassers. With filled bucket she turns down the path that leads to the cabin whose noonday smoke I saw. I have little time to "note" her, but one thing I do see. She has a flower on her dress. It probably is not a violet, but what is it? I must come here again, then perhaps I shall find out. I am glad no limited ticket made me attempt to "do" the mountain which I have just begun to see. Yes, I shall come here again.

Back to Eden

The bluff was high along the shore of the lake. The afternoon sun was direct upon it. The heat had driven some folks within the cottages, others lay under the trees, further back from the bluff. The reflection on the water was dazzling, and no one seemed inclined to look at it. No one except a lone fisherman who sat in the stern of his anchored boat, calling distance away from the shore, and watched from beneath his umbrella the sleeping bobber on his line. Nature had left her housekeeping for awhile and was resting.

About five o'clock she awoke;

sat up and shook her garment a little where she had been lying. A breeeze rippled the water, and the topmost leaves on the trees stirred slightly. The sun had dropped until the rays now slipped over the bank and out through the upper branches of the trees. The fisherman had pulled up his anchor and was rowing slowly ashore. The cottage doors were opened to the evening, and one by one the cottagers appeared from their afternoon retirement. Children began playing on a pier and among some boats drawn up on the beach. A launch, here and there, betrayed its hiding place, backed out into the water and started away, its heart beating as though it were afraid of a pursuer. Across the lake some

cows that had been standing to their backs in the water waded ashore and spread out over the meadow, cropping the grass as they went. The yellow stubble field caught the evening sun, and was regilded with its mellow light. A rattling wagon went over the rise in the road beyond the field, and the dust in its wake drifted slowly across the roadside. It was an evening when peace was the spirit of everything; everything was in love and league with everything else. A note of discord would have struck terror to all, for that note would have been unexpected.

To view and breathe the beauty and quiet of such a scene is to become part of it, and wish never for a separation. Thus I felt as I sat at

the water's side, where the ripples softly brushed the sand, and waited for the message of the hour. The day before I had been in the racket and rush of the city, where men and women and children exist. Commonly, one writing of the city will speak of its slums as though they were its characteristics. This is not the truth, however. You must go to the best and busiest thoroughfares and there you find the city. The slum lacks soap. Take the soap away from the better appearing quarter and it will be a slum. The morals of the slum are about equal to the morals of the better appearing section. To us sin and dirt look worse than sin and clean raiment. To the Greater One there is no difference.

The city of to-day is the danger spot in our civilization. It lures to death the best and purest manhood and womanhood of the land. The strong true American sons and daughters of the soil who have been developed through four generations, drawn to the city, lose their identity, their sense of responsibility, and their moral sensitiveness in a decade. If this land is to keep its pristine vigor, the call of the city must be hushed. The attraction of the artificial and unnatural must be offset by a call back to the beauty and vigor and purity of the country. The architectural appearance of the average American city is matched by the average morality. Both are vulgar, crass, materialistic. The

problem given by the city is not the beautifying of streeets and the elevation of civic morals while the attraction is continued in a call for more country product. The problem of the city is to destroy its fascination for the country man and woman.

It is refreshing to-day to find the individual who, coming to the city for a season, goes back to his mountain, lake, or prairie home, glad to escape to its refuge, and glad to stay there. That man is the hope of the future. He is the one who is not led away from what is healthful and natural to what is veneered with those things, but beneath is artificiality and disorder. That man finds the Eden of to-day, and has strength enough to reject the tempter, who

points to the tree of knowledge and says, "Its fruits shall open the eyes, and thou shall know and see the city beneath yonder smoky cloud on the distant horizon." He rejects the fruit of the tree that will reveal the city. Other fruit there is, whose flavor is times more delicate and whose satisfaction more enduring. What cares that man for the city—he prefers the freshness, and beauty, and spiritual life of his country Eden. Blessed is that man because of his common sense.

Some resident of the city—some devotee at its shrine, takes exception to this. But let such one know that cities are not productive of men. The city takes the country's offering because it must have it to endure.

Separated from the continual supply of fresh country product, fifty years would suffice to make the city the destroyer of itself.

I raise a voice against the attraction of the city. I praise the country. Preferably five years of country, than seven of life in a city that I know. A life of quietness, thoughtfulness, and simplicity by lake or mountain or on plain will make the genuineness of thought and purity of blood of which great life that walks the earth and rises heavenward must ever be composed.

So ran my meditation by the quiet lake at sunset. The sky, westward, red at the horizon, was shading into orange toward the zenith. One cloud, a floating bit of glory, went away to

rest before it should be called to take its place among the forerunners of the dawn. One star burned through the orange as the evening darkened. One thought of thankfulness for the message to a tired heart was mine.

A Contented Trio

The tree that spread out over the veranda roof sent one of its branches close against my chamber window. This branch brushed against the screen till it awakened me. When I raised the shade and looked out, the morning light was full on the east leaves of the tree, though the west branches were untouched as yet. The mountain across the valley stood clear and distinct, so that a white road, winding up the side, could be traced even at my distance of four miles. The branch that swayed against the window did more than awaken me. It mapped the day

by its persistent beckoning toward the mountain. A slight shower of the evening before added to the persuasion of the tree top, and, breakfast over, I was away to cross the valley and climb the mountain.

The delightful freshness of a morning after a shower, when every leaf upon the trees is washed and shining in the morning sun, when every bush sends up its distinctive odor, when even the weeds along the path have been cleansed of their dust and seem to attempt to start the day free from the reproach that goes with weedhood—all this freshness is supreme delight.

To cross the valley was an hour's journey. That walk was disagreeable on a hot day with dust settling

upon one, but in the morning after a shower it was a journey that one would care not to miss. It was not long before the mountain's foot was reached, and the trail led upward through a woods so dense that beginning and end of journey were lost to view. Sometimes the ascent, steep and abrupt, led around huge fallen rocks which, cast off above by the frost of winter, had fallen and threatened peril to the village below. Again the trail ran out into the open, along a shoulder of the mountain, and then I could see the long way back to distant ridge and further mountain, which led to thoughts of what lay beyond them. Thus the morning passed, as I was going upward with the sun. When it had

reached the zenith, I had reached the mountain top.

My way led along the crest to the southward, winding in and out through dense woods which thwarted the efforts of the sun to reach the ferns beneath. Here and there were clearings where a dog barked, and I suspected a cabin or cottage. Venturing through the gate in front of one of these clearings, a path that wound through the corn and by the berry bushes led me, as I hoped, to the cottage. It came into view, hidden partly by a half dozen great oaks that stood about like sentinels. A dog came wiggling from behind the cottage, one eye full of suspicion, the other full of friendliness. A cat lay on the deserted ver-

anda, and a sofa pillow wilted against the back of a rocking chair. Wherever these three are seen—dog, cat, and sofa pillow—know that your welcome is assured. If only a dog greets you, beware! he may be ugly. If you see a cat only and it dashes away at your approach, be sure the inmates of the house are not fond of company. If there is no sofa pillow, no one sits out at evening to watch the moon rise, and the parlor is dark and uninviting. But when the happy combination exists—dog, cat, and sofa pillow—walk up boldly and knock.

I did so this time. It was the heat of the noon hour, and no one was stirring. The second knock brought a response, a door opened, and some-

one came down the stairs and along the cool hall. "What is it?" asked a voice, and I knew I had no need to fear being turned away without an answer. Had the question been "Who is it?" I would not have been so sure of a welcome.

"Is this the road to the Falls?"

"Yes, straight on about two miles."

"Would you mind if I rested on your veranda awhile?"

"No. I'll bring a chair."

"There is one here."

"Is there? Oh, yes," as she pushed the door open and looked.

"Would you like a drink?"

I did not object, and so she went for a dipper of water, while I sat there wondering where I had seen

that face before. Eyes of brown, and full red cheeks, and hair raised over forehead in the mode of the day. I knew from this that she had seen other girls who perhaps wore violets in June. When she returned with the water it came to me suddenly. This is the girl I saw one day, stooping at the spring on the mountain side, when I came unobserved through the woods. When I spoke about the coolness of the water, and she said it was from a spring a short distance away, then I knew for a certainty that it was she whom I saw the day when I lay above on the rock and noticed the smoke coming from a chimney hidden among the trees. I remembered, too, that then she wore a flower, and she was thereby

admitted to the select company whose symbol is the violet.

The road that ran ahead to the Falls, my intended destination, lay blistering in the noon-day heat, and it was not as inviting as the cool of the veranda. It was more pleasant to sit there and watch the distant shadows trailing across the valley and up the forested slopes while I listened to the voice of this mountain girl. We talked about the quiet of the hill home, about its uneventful life, changed only as the seasons changed, about its gift of an atmosphere for meditation and for innocence. There was some little hint now and then in her conversation of a visit prolonged with city friends, but ever there was the note of contentment, and the in-

sight which valued this mountain cottage above all else.

There came a gray-haired old man from the orchard, and when he saw me he turned aside to the path behind the house, but here the girl stopped him, and I knew him as her grandfather, and I took of the fruit offered from his basket. From him I guessed whence came her love of the place, for he was one who had the manner of nature's child, growing old as nature doth ripen fruit. Those eyes had not looked long on men rushing and jostling each other for a footing. Those lines upon the forehead and about the eyes were not the lines which nervous worry draws across the face it strains and buffets. The respect with which he

greeted his grand-daughter was not that which came from a man who had looked upon women as a pastime. If my talk ran into the channel with his, it was not through indifference to her who sat near, but because his conversation seeemed to be so like her own that it was one wide current of her mind and his.

I wondered if her mother, to whom she had referred, was like her and him. I thought of such a trio, living the life of natural beauty and simplicity, and the charm of it kept me silent so long I quite forgot where I was. It was only when the old man went away with his basket, and the cat I had forgotten sprang upon my knee, that I came back to the fact that I had rested long enough and

had no reasonable excuse for remaining longer. It pleased me to hear the girl say, as I left, that I must stop again whenever I came by their cottage.

In the late afternoon while the sun was still upon the mountain, but had set for the valley to the eastward, I went down through the gorge, where the water tumbled frantically and the path was overhung with vines, and, walking fast, came at dusk to the edge of the valley just as the lights were beginning to flash out one by one. Across to the home on the other side was a journey in the dark, but when I reached it I found the branch upon the tree silvered with the light of the rising moon.

The Plotless Life

There is one advantage that I have when I let the tree top suggest my thought and rule my imagination. Time and space are as nothing. I may be following the windings of a stream between its banks of cat-tails and rushes to-day—to-morrow I may be wandering across the prairie land by farm and village—and day after to-morrow I may be listening to the whistling bouy and bell by the sea. If one has tired, he may lay down the book and open it again days later, at another place, and go on without missing any thread of a narrative, for there is none.

Life has no plot, if it be right.

Each day is complete in the life worth while. Wise is the man who makes his day complete, for he sleeps well each night, and it matters not whether he wakes here or there. I always associate a plot and a villain. Honest folk bother not with plot. I pray you, take up a day of life and make it come within one sketch. Do not write across the page at nightfall, "To be continued." If you do, you may unwittingly tell a lie.

A present-day mischief is the sentiment that to-day is preparation—to-morrow will be life. To-day is my life and yours. If we are moved to take an enjoyment by an hour off to-morrow, let us take the hour off to-day. Let us go to the cemetery and admire the autumn foliage or the

spring green to-day, when we can walk above ground. We shall not get much enjoyment to-morrow, when they let us down slowly into a dark hole that shuts away the view of gorgeous tree or greening bush. To-day the door swings wide on hinges, to-morrow the lid is screwed down.

I have no apology to offer for the lack of plot in these chapters. I have made each as complete as I could. They are not models of style, nor anything, that I know. I have tried, and am trying, to say something to offset the notion that the city is the mecca of life. I would call heart and mind back to the world God has made. Let us cease to worship our own handiwork, for it is just such stuff as any man could make. Sup-

pose there is more beef raised to-day, and the steel output is larger. Does beef taste any better? Does the man who rolls the steel enjoy life any more than he did two decades ago? A negative answer is likely the proper one. Therefore, let us cease to brag about our material resources, for they are not necessarily an aid to spiritual progress.

A man may be a good man, and yet if he is ever emphasizing the material, he is responsible for certain corrupting influences in life. Let me explain. I note that reform in city affairs is slow, and that corruption is swift footed. I note that good men are unstable in combination, and that bad men hold together. This question has been in my mind—what uni-

fies the men of corruption? Is graft a stronger unifying force than the simple motive of righteousness? It seems so, and it is because we run to the emphasis of the material and neglect the spiritual.

Another example of this tendency to materialize life I would put on this page. Time was when music was the expression of soul harmony. It is true yet where real music is found, but the fittest symbol of this mechanical age is the pianola. It grinds out the melodies, the harmonies, in that cold, regular fashion that would drive Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner, Chopin, to suicide. Yet I have seen a pianola in a Bishop's home! A new crusade—the birthplace of our Lord must be saved from

the pork packer and the manufacturer of soulless things!

This morning was a spring morning in autumn. A thunderstorm occurred last night. As I looked from the window two disconnected lines ran in my mind:

"Morning's at seven.
The hillside's dew-pearled."

Both lines were true. I climbed the hill, and the mist was hanging over the river. All about me was the fresh and healthful world of the day spring. The mist lifted and drifted, more and more of the earth was revealed, the river and the distant hills. My heart and fancy were increasingingly touched. Such is ever true. There is always more to nature—ever widening prospects—a new and larger call.

Straight-line Effects

How satisfying are the simpler pleasures! Would that men might realize that pleasure is not necessarily a compound of sensations. It may be a single emotion derived from the quiet, simple, unostentatious in life. Through the influence of the idea that all things must work together for good before happiness is realized there is many a strained and worried look where there is sufficient cause for happiness. There is no ground for self-approval when we feel happy as a result of a fortunate combination of circumstances. We would be dolts, indeed, did we not

respond when all things conspire to bless us. No one may rightly praise himself unless he is of that sensitiveness which receives pleasure from a single emotion.

For instance, contrast the furnishing of two rooms. One is the abode of the individual who desires the ornate or garish thing about him. If he is wealthy, he will have elaborate carvings, highly colored hangings, a confusion of elements in the furnishings. If he be of little means, he will have flashy prints, gimcracks, and things with quantities of varnish. The other room is the abode of him who sees beauty in the plain, simple, genuine article. The doors are not paneled, but are plain slabs of oak, which make one think of the forest.

The casements are ungrooved. The table is heavy and solid, and the chair is uncarved, unvarnished. Such a room as instanced first is an exhibition of confusion. The second room is the revelation of order. Elaborateness is unnecessary for beauty, and also for pleasure. Singleness of effect is real beauty, so real pleasure. The straight line has just as much in its favor as the curve. There is no reason why it should be less beautiful. Is a right angle any more severe than a circle? Some think so, because their ancestors have been looking so long at circles. If a circle is the line of beauty, the drunken man cuts a finer figure along the street than he who goes the shortest way between two points.

SWAYING TREE TOPS

There is no intricate design in the object which yields real pleasure. There is just as much pleasure in an apple as in a glass of cider, in a grape as in a drop of wine. The one is ready at hand, the other man designed. There is as much pleasure possible in the two hours before 10 P. M. as in the two after 10 P. M. There is as much enjoyment in sitting on the grass under a tree with a far, fair prospect of sky and hill, as there is in sitting on a plush divan, in a stuffy reception hall while looking at imitation of sky and field. Moreover, when you leave your friend in the first instance you grasp his hand full and cordially, and if you never see him again remember the warmth of that clasp; while in the second in-

stance, when you leave your friend you touch your two fingers to his and remember only the silliness of the thing.

The idea that pleasure is compounded out of a variety of ingredient emotions has set people on a chase for it. I have yet to hear of such a chaser ever overtaking his object. It requires sensitiveness to feel pleasure. The blasé, the world-calloused, feel it not.

This morning the bare trees stand stripped of leaves, the grass is brown, frost lies over everything. A cloudy sky caps down the landscape with gloom. There is no bird note, nor sign of life. Not many weeks ago the air at morning was vibrant with melody, but, as this chill has settled

down, the birds with their songs have escaped the lifeless prison. Birds fly away before the chill comes in the air. Seek them where the sunshine filters through the leaves. Has joy gone out of your heart? Perhaps it flew away before the chill comes in the air. world spirit entered your life. Let the sunlight of simplicity radiate your realm, then shall the notes of gladness resound again.

A Wintry Vale

I was walking to-day through a vale where the bones of last summer's beauty were scattered on either hillside. It was a cheerless prospect. Fallen tree trunk, and brush, and dead grass without a hint of color were scattered all about, while up through this stood the gaunt, bare trees, silent, mournful. It was like a walk through a field of graves. A stillness like the tomb was in the vale. The wind sighing across the valley would have been a relief—but even wind was dead.

Had this prospect of death been extensive, there would have been for

me a certain interest awakened by the view of far-stretching woodland and hillside, but the vale was limited. In sight was its border, and I knew all that lay beyond.

Some lives are like this wintry vale. We should not consider a cold, stern life as deserving censure. There may have been a winter in that life. The only thing that justly deserves censure is the limited prospect, which is so often in evidence. There is no extent of view. It is shut in—you see all at a glance. This only, the limitation, may properly be disapproved.

That vale, which is so barren and desolate to-day, may become clothed with the beauty of verdure in a few months. Then I shall not notice even

its small extent. Thus even the cold, gloomy, narrow life may be changed. It may become warmed by friendship, and the flower of its own nature may spring out in response. So its limitations shall be half unnoticed.

There lies the hope for many. If they cannot be broad, limitless in surprises, they can be intense and satisfying for the stranger.

The Retreat of Life

The trees are very beautiful this morning, as they stand sheeted with ice in the sunlight. This is winter's final victory. Months ago the first frost touched the verdure and withered it. The leaves clung a few weeks longer to the branches, then, hopelessly, let go their grasp and fluttered to the earth, there to be chased by the winds. The trees stood bare awhile. Sometimes, in the winter gale, they seemed to be protesting loudly at their rough treatment; anon, they stood still and waited. I wonder if they were quiet so that they might be fettered thus. Anyhow, this morning they are imprisoned by the grim ice king, as though,

while they were sleeping, an enemy had come and walled them in.

The trees wear this cold beauty quietly, patiently, without a murmur. Though so quiet, I know there is life at their hearts, waiting its time to issue from this icy prison.

This is the lesson for all life in tree or man. Though it be surprised in the night, bound fast by the enemy, let it retreat to the warm chambers of the heart and wait. The sun is far away just now, oblique its rays, but it is swinging nearer day by day, and under its warm influence without, and the heart-life within, the tree shall clothe itself with the greenery of the perfect spring. So, too, man shall grow glad again, though now he waits fettered by cold sorrow.

SWAYING TREE TOPS

In these gray winter mornings there is still one tie that holds me to the spring. It is a little brown bird whose song rings out clear, full, and sweet. I wonder why he has chosen to remain here when he might have flown away to a warmer land. He seems to be the only one of his kind, for I hear only his song. To-day, sitting on the icy limb, he whistles as though it were a June morning. I am glad that there is one bird left after summer has departed—one bird whose song is my matins and vespers. If I feel not kindly toward the cold morn, this bird assumes my obligations, and raises a song to heaven. Sing on, thou only bird, and thou shalt have my heart with thee!

The Going of the Past

He journeyed yesterday into the Other Land. He was the last of his generation. As he lay in the large room of the old house, the simple service read over him seemed in keeping with the quiet simplicity of his presence, when he had been about the house in the strength of his ripe old age. He had been a man of the old school, white-haired, fair-faced, with a certain tone about him, often affected by some, but never unconsciously. His manner of holding his cheroot between his fingers, as he sat by the fireplace reading, now and then deliberately drawing in the smoke, marked him as different from

the present-day man who nervously chews the end of his cigar.

Such departures bring vividly before us the going of the past. It is not "dozing in the present, and dreading the future," to dream of the past. It is not to underestimate the present to value the past. There was an elegance, a reserve, a refinement about the life of fifty years ago which is not in evidence to-day, except as it is seen in some lingering representative of the old school, such as this one who left yesterday. Perhaps fifty or seventy-five years hence this new material age of to-day will have become softened and refined, and then will have true beauty, but now it stands crass, irreverent, iconoclastic.

Plenty of Time

There are parts of our country where I love to linger. There is sentiment in the very air one breathes. I seem there to settle back into the heart of things, to feel that unalloyed happiness and contentment which result from an intermingling of the poetry and prose of life. In such places poverty is even shorn of its distress. There is the tradition of better days and evidences of ancestral pride.

That which makes the poverty of the commercial centers so terrible today is the coarseness, vulgarity, and utter lack of any touch of refinement. The spirit of "get there and have"

works, in the successful, the spectacle of a veneered, showy society, dwelling in imitation palaces; in the unsuccessful, squalid poverty and dirt.

So, I take to the life that is removed from the little hurries and the great. In the atmosphere of plenty of time I walk the quaint streets of towns whose church bells were cast, perhaps, in foundries across the sea, yet ring just as clear in the Sabbath quiet as when they first spoke from the century-old steeples; or, I go along the shaded road which leads by the opulent plantation, over whose great-house the live oak stretches; or, I wind up the mountain trail to the ranch buildings which overlook the far-stretching acres.

And I am content to live slowly,

for there is plenty of time in this great universe of God; and that which will be fit to abide forever must not know hurry. That live oak, standing over the great-house, has seen so many generations of weeds come up and die. That redwood on the mountain side was there when Columbus waded ashore on San Salvador.

A Southerner to the Last

They said, when the General died, that he was the last of the great men of the Confederacy; the last heroic figure of the Lost Cause. He was born and educated, he labored, fought, and died in the same section of his heart's land. He represented the highest type of native, Southern manhood. He was a man of convictions, intrepid, chivalrous. He fought for the Confederacy for the same reason that other men fought for the Union. He believed that he was right. From his viewpoint he was right. For the same reason men to-day on both sides are right. If either crit-

icises the other, it is a mistake. The principles for which Confederate and Union man fought still live, and should live, but the war has closed and should so remain.

The General, at the close of the war, accepted defeat as a man, and for over thirty years taught, by act and word, that war was over and that reconciliation was to be the final noble victory.

It is not strange that there was a South and a North, or that there is a South and a North, or that there will continue to be a South and a North. Two homes stand side by side. In the face of a common peril the members go out together, but in the midst of peace they enjoy their own home circle. That circle is theirs—sacred.

Let South and North exist as they do to-day, side by side, yet distinct. I see no peril in such relation. It is natural. Let those who clamor for the impossible, turn rather to the development of the home spirit, which will make South and North, while distinct in temperament and ideals, yet friendly, neighborly.

This General was a Southerner to the last. He loved his land and people. That is the reason his death was a blow, felt by mountaineer and valley man, and man in the Southern city. There comes to some the recollection of the days, fifty years ago, when he was a young man, and the South was over the threshold of a future bright with promise. To those of his age still remaining, there are

long thoughts of the simplicity, the cultured ease, the wide hospitality, of days before the devastation, and many fail to see in the future any redevelopment of that old life, and mourn, not only for the man gone, but for the days gone also. There are others, children of the General and his day, inheriting the temperament and principles and native grain, who look more hopefully into the future, and are striving to make it like the best of the past. The chivalry of its men, the gentle pride of its women, will be again the features of a life built on the old foundations out of the ruins and remnants which have survived. Herein lieth hope and joy—not that there be no South and no North, but that there be both South

and North, preserving the family likeness.

If the General was the last great figure of the Confederacy, there has arrived the time for new figures of the South, like him, only younger, who draw their vitality out of that past day by breathing the atmosphere of the present. And since ancestry, climate, conditions, make individuals whose viewpoints are naturally different, let no one from another ancestry and condition set the type and demand conformity thereto. Sad the time when one may not say: " There is a Southerner."

Voices of the Gorge

Not least among the pleasures of traveling is that to be had when you leave the train at the last station and pass on afoot, ahorse, or by vehicle. You have then quite gotten away from the familiar, and your journey takes on the strange and unexpected. Wherever the road from the station may lead, it is certain there will be scenes and experiences, new, and unpremeditated, and these are the stages of a journey most valued by the true rambler. There is a sense of freedom, the joy of living every moment separately and to the full, that takes one away from his past and holds one from unwise looks into the

future. This comes only when the last whistle of the departing train is heard.

The station building on the Santa Fé was made of boards, nailed perpendicularly, and there was no platform but a bed of cinders. The few houses about the station were wide apart and surrounded by sage bush. The sandy roads ran across each other for a half mile square, dragging the houses with them, then all the houses were dropped and a single road went on up the sloping valley to the foothills, five miles distant. While the road could "shake" the houses and leave them tumbled behind, it could not leave us, and its very independence, as it went mountainward, was its attractiveness.

The air was heavy with the odor of

the bush, the road dusty, and the sun glaringly bright. Shade was wanting, as always the last thing to make completeness is not found.

The five miles were lessening with every stride. Four—three—two—and then the shadow of the mountains, stretching down the valley, received us into its protection, and all we carried of our discomfort was our thirst. But all things work together for good to the wayfarer upon the earth. To quench the thirst of the hot trail there flowed out of the cañon the snow waters of the peaks. Where it flowed from the gorge, rushing with much noise and foam, we tarried on the bank and pitched our camp. While one made ready the camp, the other shot the rabbit and the quail for the Sunday-morrow pot. Then

while the hunter dressed his meat, the camper vanished up the darkening gorge.

The hour between sunset and dark, in the land of the mountains, is the hour the camper loves. He feels that he could wander ever in the darkening gorges, and never once feel that they were gloomy. All voices of the wild are distinct at that hour. They may be intermingled, yet with little difficulty each voice may be distinguished, telling its secrets as a child does when it falls off to sleep.

The camper, as he picked his footing among the boulders where the stream rushed down, heard the voice that told of snowy heights miles away, where the morning sun first shattered the icy crags with his lance and liberated the tiny stream that

started away so quickly it could not be imprisoned again. He heard that voice tell of the stream's acquaintance with others like itself, intent on escape—how they joined forces and felt the power of their union, as men who rightly estimate the value of companionship. Then the voice told of the cavern, through which the stream felt its way in the darkness, to meet at last the burst of noonday sunlight. So alternating—darkness and light—it ever rushed down and out, and on the morrow it would greet the dawn from the valley.

There was another voice. It was a whisper among the pines, which crowded away from the foot of the gorge and mounted to the summit of the ridge, stepping on each other in

their haste. It was the voice of the evening breeze, that ever speaks of peace. "Be not so frantic to escape, pine tree," it said. "Tarry in this evening hour and think twice ere thou desert the stream." Sage advice for other than pine tree—for men who hear the voice of the waters and flee away to the heights, where, if they lose their footing, they fall to more than injury.

The gorge had grown dark. The Sierras—snow covered—were flushed with rose. A halloo down the cañon reminded the camper that the hunter had finished his task and had grown lonely. He retraced his steps and came upon that individual, doing his best to furnish smoke, while the fire did its part in heat and light.

Spring Waters

It is greening time again. The cycle of the seasons has passed. One year ago a thunderstorm announced the advent of spring, and now the same thing has happened again. The rain of yesterday washed all the rust from the hills, and the color that gladdens the heart is to be seen everywhere.

How many little streams there are, flowing down to form the Larger Water! Each is unknown to the others, till now and then two or three grow friendly, and flow on together chattering gaily in the sunlight. Streams do not refuse company; still they are very content to go on by themselves, each cleaning up its por-

tion of the hill. Each goes intently on its way—surmounting, surrounding, undermining difficulties, rejoicing in its strength, rising higher and braver with every obstacle that falls in its course. Here and there little streams are running their separate life courses, to mingle finally in the great sea, and, losing their identity, become one great water.

Take this as a Parable of Life. Each person in his course carrying away the rust of unsightliness, and leaving the cañon of life fair, and green, and growing. He is unknown, in large measure, to his neighbors, save as a common task gives a common life. He gains in strength with every trial, until at last his life and others are mingled in the Life of God.

The Divine Adjustment

A footpath led aside from the highway, and I followed it. It wound through the thicket, and I emerged on a shoulder of the hill which gave a fair and high prospect of the river. I had not supposed that so much could be seen by so slight a change of location. A dozen rods had formed the circle of my view from the highway. Two minutes' walk gave me an extensive landscape.

To the traveler along the road of his ambition there are many little altitudes that call aside. 'Tis but a step to them, and yet the outlook is enlarged a hundred fold. There is always this Divine adjustment of

highway, side path, and altitude. Wherever one is found there are the others. But many miss the fortunate arrangement, and do not note the side paths which would enliven their journey. And when they do see them, how few take time to advantage themselves thereby!

The Hillside Sleepers

Two miles away beyond the river, near to the top of the hillside, a few gravestones stand, plainly visible in the sunlight. They are gathered in an irregular line, white against the green slope. They are guarding the sleepers till the morning of the resurrection. At the distance where I stand I cannot count whether there are eight, or ten, or twelve. Some sleepers there are overlooked from a two-mile view. They belong to a little family of graves of which the white slabs tell the location and over which the cedars sing a requiem.

Could those sleepers awake, and,

rising, go their paths, retracing the steps that brought them there, how far they would wander, how widely they would separate! From hamlet, valley, and city they have been gathered to their rest. Ambitions, loves, and earthly business led them, when alive, everywhere about their individual pursuits. Their interests were large. Their names were known, perhaps famed, possibly revered. Some stir they made among men. But now they have been gathered to that spot, and all that tells they ever were, and where the green sod lies undulated above them, is that group of white stones on the brow of the hill. To the observer they are not only rounded with a sleep, but unknown save by a stone.

A human life is of supreme importance to the body which contains it, to the friends who love it, but how little the world cares for it, and when it once is gone how surely oblivion enfolds it!

The Garden of Quietness

Out on the edge of the valley the redbuds are massed in beautiful profusion. They stand level with the summit of the hill. A few days ago there was the slightest hint of color in the space where I knew, from last year, that I might expect their appearance. Day after day they have grown brighter, until this morning they stand a gorgeous dash of color in the midst of a pale green landscape.

It is wonderful how the great milliner trims these spring hills! What rare taste—all colors blend. The pronounced are softened by contrast. All are harmonized by being

intermingled. The redbuds grow bright as the green of grass and leaf deepens about them. There are no sudden shocks for the eye, as one walks out these days. Everything is where it should be, as much of it as should be, at the time when it should be.

Who knows the source of that joy spirit which comes to one walking in the outdoor world in spring? Analyze the feeling. A heart light, a mind quick, a body filled with the sense of bouyancy. One hour in the spring sunshine, as it is warming into summer, does more for a tired body, a gloomy mind, a sad heart, than barrels of patent tonic. Why? Because the season is that of harmony. Colors are blending to perfection.

Discords are unknown. The birds tune carefully to a common key. Harmony is Queen of Spring.

Stay the unfolding of the new life on earth at this hour. It is all we could wish. Let it grow another week. It is fuller, but not more harmonious. So the spring joy is keen and full, because there is not a harsh note or color anywhere.

This joy abiding will be possible when harmony is all about and within us continually. Live where the harmony is found. Why herd in self-made prisons, when the free air of earth blows softly through the green cathedrals, and the joyous sunshine drops gently upon the leafy roofs? If men to-day would value less the companionship of each other

in the prison corridors, and make themselves fit to be good friends with themselves, out in God's world of fresh, harmonious, natural beauty, there would be much more to their lives and to their influence.

"Seek peace and pursue it," says the Book. Therein is found the secret of joyful life. Seek peace would you find it. Go where it habitates. Peace is resident in the Garden of Quietness. Men make a clamorous place, and think that they shall entice peace to dwell therein. Peace is found in her garden among her trees and flowers. Men must go there to find her. As soon shall trees grow roots in air as peace dwell in the dens of noise.

Where Lilacs Bloom

The old house is surrounded by lilac bushes. They are blooming now and the air is heavy with their fragrance. It fills the garden and floats out even to the road, and the passerby turns as he scents the odor, and lo! his memory has turned back a page in his life, and he sees the yard of the home of his youth, full of lilac bushes and violets. He is sitting on the shady side of the house, for the May sunshine is bright, and then the perfume is sweetest on the side of the house where the bushes are. The old home place is at its best when the thick foliage of May enwraps it, making a bower of beauty. He can

sit on the veranda and not be seen from the path outside the fence, for the hedge is dense with leaves.

That day so long ago, the boy sat thinking of the home, but not admiring it. He loved it, yet it seemed to him that it was pitifully small and old. For twenty years he had known it. Every spring, as long as he could remember, he had seen the lilacs bloom. With his home folks he had watched the seasons come and go. But, somehow, there was a growing discontent. He felt as though the leafy walls were prison bars. Outside—away there were wider yards and sweeter flowers and finer houses. He must see them. As the winter had been passing, he had been speaking these thoughts to his folks. Now,

just a hint—now, a suggestion. But they understood as well as though he had explained all. Their boy was getting out of boyhood, and the call of the world was in his ears.

Down in the kitchen, in the evening after he had gone to his room, his parents talked it over. "Our boy is restless. He wants to leave home. We cannot hold him here and we may as well consent, but——" and they never finished the sentence, though they often talked thus far, and always ended thus. Yet each understood the other, and the sentence needed no ending.

To-day, as the passerby caught the odor of the lilacs, he remembered all that past life. He remembered his departure one afternoon. He left his

mother weeping at the gate, his father drove in the wagon to the station. They said little, for both were near to tears. The boy was then almost minded to give up his going; but he went.

The years passed and he came in vacation days back to the old place. It seemed smaller, but it grew dearer. He had learned that nothing outside the hedge was better than that within. But the stream of home experience was broken, and could never flow on as before.

To-day, with these memories, there came the great realization, the lesson, as it comes to everyone, after experience. The little yard where our folks live—where the lilacs bloom in spring—where the simple, whole-

some home life runs on so quietly, there, as nowhere else upon the earth, does the joy of life conceal itself, but there, as nowhere else, can it be surely discovered and possessed.

When the Forest Closes In

June has shut up all the avenues of far away prospect. The eye cannot pierce the foliage of one tree, to say nothing of the hundreds that have crowded together as a green barrier. There are times, windy days in early spring or still days in late autumn, when the heart craves the long vision; and one climbs the hill and gazes across the dimly greening landscape over which the shadows of the March clouds fly in startled fear; or one walks through the woods stripped of their leaves, and between the bare branches looks down the slope into the purple haze

that hangs over the land. One loves "out yonder" in those seasons. But in June one is enclosed on all sides by the dense foliage, and finds his enjoyment in shadow, and leaf, and flower odor.

The honeysuckle climbing over the trellis has odor enough to fill the yard, but does not run over into the wide spaces of the outer world. If one ever grows content it is in this leafy month. Given only a place walled in by forest, some sunlight, a few birds and flowers, and there even a dyspeptic or nerve-shattered person will find solace. I must modify that by saying, if he wants solace. In this season one comes to a recognition of the different wants of people, and it is made evident that they

get what they want. If you desire to get a true understanding of an individual's spiritual constitution, learn how he takes his June holiday.

Does he know nothing better than some enclosure, with a thousand ways of spending his money for a sensation? Does he think that the corridors of a prison, otherwise known as a city, furnish pleasure to the prisoner therein? Or does he seek the place where men are forgotten, and nature is his hostess, bringing out to him the service of a banquet and a minstrelsy? The character of his spirit will be determined by these different June holidays.

You may always judge the worth of a holiday by its close. Does it taper down to a point, and as dark-

ness comes you go home because there is nothing else to do? The day when nature acts as hostess has no such end. If the tree tops sway, increasing all the day in the vigor of their movements, as night draws on they subside into slower motions, and at last stand quiet against the evening sky. And then is when tree tops are eloquent. They whisper to each other as the cool breath of the night comes wandering along the lanes of the sky. Finally, by a common impulse, they cease to whisper, and listen to the robin and the thrush speak in whistle and liquid trill of what nature does for bird souls. The darkness rises like a tide up the hill, until the trees stand knee deep, then waist deep, then stretch out their

arms as though disinclined to wet their hands in the shadows. The tide stays ere it reaches the tree tops, and all the night the trees hold their heads above it. Toward the morning they shake themselves awake, to greet the sun without a shadow on their faces, as good friends ever greet each other.

A Blue-grass Idyl

It was in the Blue Grass country, in the early summer, where one time I saw the girl with the violets. And there, I think, she had reached the highest type of physical beauty. A long ancestry, of which she was the flower, stretched back into the early decades of our country's settlement. A child of a section she might have been called. No land was as beautiful to her as the wide rolling meadow lands where she lived. No place so dear as that country home with its great trees, its house of lofty rooms and open halls. In that house she had been born, in it she had grown to

womanhood, about it clustered for her the dearest memories.

It was the sunset hour. A golden haze hung over the fields. The girl walked down the long avenue that led from the house to the country highway. Century-old trees arched above the lane. On either side sloped wide lawns bordered with hedges. Beyond the hedges stretched field on field of blue grass pasture land, where horses and cattle grazed. From the rear, in the region of the stables, came the voices of negroes at their evening tasks.

The quiet of the hour and the pastoral beauty were felt by the girl as she leaned over the gate at the road side. A light buggy, drawn by a slender-limbed, arch-necked horse,

came into view from the town two miles away. The driver glanced toward the gate, touched his hat, and sped by along the pike. The dust drifted over into the opposite field, and it was quiet again. On some low hills to the east the last rays of the sun lingered, and the girl's thoughts lingered with the sun upon the beauty of the scene which spoke to her so familiarly of a past that belonged to her.

The present, in all its richness of life, was not the growth of a year. A gaudy moving van had, in her memory, never passed up that long avenue to the house. Its furnishings had grown slowly, piece by piece, and for ten years she could not recall having seen an ornament or piece of fur-

niture enter that home. Yet how well, in its elegant simplicity, it was furnished. Strangers in the town yonder occasionally walked out, begging admittance to look at the paintings and furnishings. For the twenty-three years of her life there had been no change, and also no decay, and her mother's experience before her had been the same. She could not bear the thought of going out from that home. Evening could never be as fair as this one, in any other spot on earth. Could there come one whose words would woo her away from the house of her ancestors? To her the future did not lie wrapped up in a new experience whereunto love opened the door. That might be hers some day, yet no frenzy of anxiety,

such as possessed those in the nearby town, stirred her to desert that home. The roots of her life sank deep into the soil, as her father's had done, and she blossomed in her beauty a foretoken of the fruit of to-morrow.

The Summit of the Year

Mid-summer is the summit in an out-of-door experience. You can look down one slope back to spring—along the other down to autumn. It is hard to say which slope is most attractive.

It has been a wonderfully rich experience as one has traveled upward from the first hint of spring to the fulfillment of summer. The first tender promise of new life broke the hard surface of the earth into the smile of fair landscapes. The sun came earlier and stayed longer at his warming task. All about there was the race of flower, and leaf, and grass

blade, until the earth was billowed with foliage. At this moment of the summit season one can walk through aisles, dim and shadowy, and feel shut out from sky above and neighbors on all sides. As all this has been transpiring upon the earth, in one's heart and mind there has gone on a like transformation, by the arousing of the dormant faculties, the warming of the heart, the racing of the better motives, until one's experience billows up, full and fragrant, making many a path of seclusion, where one may walk at will and enjoy an evening quiet. All this has been. It is a certainty.

On the other slope the swift days run down to the gate of autumn, which stands ajar awaiting them.

Through the yellow grain fields their light feet hurry, over the brown, dried meadow land, and across the brook that is but a rivulet in the summer drought, staying not, but intent on the orchards and radiant woods beyond the gate. During these hurrying days many things grow into maturity, and the day of seed on tree, weed, and flower rules everywhere.

One puts out a hand now and then to keep from rushing down the slope too fast. There are many minutes which one wishes might be hours. There is that country walk along a highway bordered by fields of corn and harvested grain. Here are meadows, and sheep lie along the fences. There in the corner of the pasture the cattle stand close to keep

the flies from their sides. And the country road lies straight away, washed clean of dust by last night's rain.

Or again, it is Sabbath morning, and the country by the lake lies resting from the toil of the weekday. The water is as calm as the face of patience. No wind is stirring, no ripples even lap against the sand. The path runs down to the beach, then climbs the hill and wanders across the pasture to the highway, over the bridge by the willows, and then across the boggy place to find the shore again. The sun hangs half way up the eastern sky. The only shadows are those cast by the trees upon the margin of the lake. No clouds anywhere, but blue sky over

all. Startling is the splash of the fish a dozen rods from shore. I climb the steps over the meadow fence, and sit on the topmost, listening to the crickets in the grass, and the cry of the long-legged bird that wades in the shallows by the reef. It is an hour of indolent enjoyment, an hour of Sabbath worship in the temple not made with hands, temporal upon the earth.

Thus the season, either on the slope that rises up to mid-summer, or down from it, has these moments choice as treasure of rare worth and short life. While we are thinking thus, we may as well notice how closely this sloping of the seasons figures the human life. There is a summit of maturity, when man may look back

down the grade of his years to the springtime, with its awakening, and also forward down the slope, where his feet must go to the winter and its sleep. In the past experience there are moments that he would live over. As he goes down to the expected, yet unknown end, there are moments when he would tarry in the ecstasy of indolent enjoyment. He who stands at the summit of his journey, in the maturity of his years, may feel it as pleasant to track back to the cradle as to break forward to the grave.

To come to God entirely through nature is impossible. Nor can it be done by the steam engine or pianola. There are extremes where God is never found. Extremes are of man's invention. The happy mean is Divine. Neither the natural nor the artificial has more of God in it than the man who sees the one or uses the other. The godless man can read no divine message on the page of nature. Neither can the godless man make, by a machine, anything suggestive of, or instinct with, spiritual power.

The man who goes to nature without God to explain what he may see, on fair shining days, receives a physical impression. He may misjudge and miscall it a spiritual blessing. If

while afield the sky should become leaden, rain drip from the branches of the trees, chill take hold of his body, he might misjudge and miscall the experience one of spiritual affliction, when it, too, is only physical. He who goes to nature knowing nothing of God, gets nothing but physical stimulation, either pleasing or depressing, as the day may be.

The engineer who sits within the cab, the machinist who runs the lathe, will see nothing but two "streaks of rust," or a pile of steel shavings, if he have no sense of God.

It matters not where a man goes, he can worship, but he must first know the Lord of Worship. God is immanent in nature and industry, but nature and industry are not God.

Soil Thoughts

Among the hills, the girl with her violets and I follow the winding road, in the heart of a quiet land. The day is one which, if you were to come upon suddenly, you would be uncertain whether it were early spring or late autumn. You know not what the stillness in the air promises. It may be that the trees are to bud to-morrow, or the snowflakes drift across the landscape.

Warm and golden were the sun's rays as we went on our way, but so far afield did we go that the sun set behind a cloud and evening fell about us. No bird whistled cheerily from the tree top, but a leaf fluttered down to join its fellows, wind-heaped

beside the road, and then we knew it was not spring, but next day would be December.

In the days just before December there are hours when the quiet of the country becomes most friendly in its voice to those who go with listening ear along its roads. The trees and shrubs are bare, and nothing interferes with long views. The secrets that every dense woodland and thicket guarded jealously in June are now seen to have been the river winding through the one, and the nests that birds have forsaken in the other. Across the land at intervals run the dividing roads, along which stand the farmhouses, their maples and elms stripped of foliage, serving poorly as a screen from intrusive eyes.

One wonders what determined the site of the average farmhouse. Perhaps a grove of trees explains the location of one or two. Perhaps a hill from which a view can be secured tells the reason for the situation of two or three more, but of all the rest nothing apparent indicates their builder's reason for putting them where they are.

The girl with the violets says she cannot understand why that brick house should have been placed on the south side of the road, in a treeless field, while just across the road is a grove of trees which would have made such a cool retreat in summer and given unlimited opportunity for landscape gardening effects. Then I remark that I cannot see why those

folks built that "upright and lean-to" on the side of the hill away from the river, and facing into another hill, when they might have put a cottage near the top of the other slope, that would have furnished a prospect, winter and summer, across the valley, where the shallow river makes music in its rapids.

Live folks do such queer things for themselves and with themselves, while often they do better with the dead. Yonder is the cemetery, beautiful even in the bareness of November, with its trees and hedge and long vista down the valley which its dead cannot get up to see.

But with all the mistakes and queer things that folks who live in the country do when they select the loca-

tion for their houses, still they are highly favored, and, with the multitude of their blessings, this can be overlooked. For out here, on these quiet November days, all can think if they wish. It is a joy to let the rush go by—the train, the trolley car, the automobile—and jog on slowly over the farm lands, out to the cornfields, into the orchard and back again with the wagon filled with the long yellow or the round red. At every trip the crib grows fuller, and the cellar bin is heaped higher.

Thus, in the autumn days, to be leisurely and purposefully gathering and storing away the real corn and fruit, makes more unreal and senseless the mad rush on that so-called market where men who would hardly know an ear of corn from an apple

buy and sell that which has never been grown and never will be. Some there are on the market who have known the country, and such a commentary they present on human weakness. That any man who has once been near to the soil—the source of strength—should leave it for the market—the abode of weakness—is more than can be understood in a moment. It is one of those contrasts which life brings to our attention, whereby we learn that man is prone to idiocy from the beginning. On the market, frantic to buy or sell, rich to-day and a pauper to-morrow so far as dollars are concerned, pauper all the while so far as productivity and service are concerned; on the farm lands, leisurely working with nature, whose pay is slow, but ever increas-

ing—such are the alternatives for every man.

I stayed one time for two weeks and a day or two where they danced till twelve o'clock at night, where the bells rang at five o'clock in the morning for early mass, where they rushed all day, till dancing time again, to pack pork and make steel things—that I concluded was as near the place of eternal torment as I had ever been, or ever wished to be, and I resolved never to get that near again. But these November days, still and beautiful, are surely hours in the vestibule to Heaven. Maybe they are Heaven. We can easily believe that, for they work out good for our spirits, and One has said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."

The Smug Life

How the smug propriety of a city street palls upon me. Back of the propriety was the greed of real estate owners, and along with it, on the part of those who had the houses built, was the lack of artistic sense. All the houses are within a dozen feet of the sidewalk, and so close together that air and light are impossibilities. Here we live, thinking we have a beautiful place. We put on our best clothes and go down the cement sidewalk a few squares and back again. Day after to-morrow we will do the same stunt, and then say to ourselves, "How nice it is to live in town."

We have not room to move, nor

distance to see, nor light to renovate our houses. Consequently we take a car when we have five squares to go, because our muscles are too weak to walk—we think. We cannot appreciate space, and if we chanced upon a place where houses were one hundred feet apart, or should find a village with the houses set in orchards, we would immediately talk about being lonesome, and say the lack of conveniences was something "terrible." So we frantically rush at the first chance to pay twenty-five dollars per month for six rooms and ten feet of space. I am wondering how long we shall so enjoy the "benefits" of civilization.

Come, let us go to the country—and stay!

Mountain Moonlight

The charm of moonlight among the mountains in mid-summer! What words will describe it?

The day was long and hot, and the mountain sides were scorched and yellowed by the sun. The trees hung listless, drooping, wilted. The birds all afternoon were quiet. The only sound that broke the hot silence was the long whistle of the locomotive as it drew the train down the valley and behind the other range.

The sun went down, red-hot and blistering to the last. Then a cow, somewhere on the ridge side, concluding it was time to go home, got up and shook her bell. It seemed

to be the signal for a general awakening. A rabbit hopped out, and sat looking toward the red west. Some birds struck up a vesper song. The branches of the topmost trees upon the ridge began to wave slightly in the soft breath of the evening. The western sky deepened from rose and saffron to maroon, then to duller tints, which finally were lost in the darkness.

After an hour of brooding dark, the east began to brighten and then the moon slipped over the pine-edged horizon and floated above the indistinct disorder of the hills.

Along the wide road on the ridge crest I pass in the glory of the moonlit night. The shadows are deep where the oaks stand thick beside the

road, but they only seem to make the unshadowed places lighter. The road winds to the east side of the ridge, where I can look over the tree tops to the distant mountains, that are lying like sentinels guarding the gateway whence the dawn shall come. Then the highway slips along the western ledge, below which all is dark and full of mystery as yet. After the heat of the day, the delicious coolness of the night air is a tonic draught, and I think I could thus walk on forever and never weary. The woods give out the odor of dew-refreshed plant and flower. The air is heavy with the scent of the pines, which stand solemn and ghostly at the foot of the ridge. There is no sound except the chirp

of the night insects, which, while it brushes away the silence, yet interferes not with hearing distant sounds should they come. But there are no distant sounds. All is one big world of silent moonlighted ridge, valley, and mountain.

As the evening wears on to midnight a vapor collects in the valley along the river, whose winding course is thus detected, where it swings out of the north, and making the turn of Moccasin Bend, at last rushes from sight westward through the narrows. The vapor increases until it enfolds all lesser elevations than the one from which I watch. The city lights disappear. The incline car on the opposite mountain drops down a third its way and then is gone. The

moon makes beautiful this valley foam as it billows and mantles all in concealment.

The progress of the vapory tide is stayed at last. There are no longer any mountains. They have become islands in the sea of silver white. Just at the edge of the island on which I stand, from the trees which border the beach, a mocking bird trills into the night.

The Isolation of Dawn

Rise early, and go out to keep company with the morning. Morning lasts in summer till eight or nine o'clock. So you may choose your hour, but the earlier you choose to go the pleasanter will be your experience.

It was before sunrise and the woods were still gray with shadows. The Lake was streaked with broad bands of calm water, between which rippled a million joyous wavelets. As I dipped softly out upon the red-tinged water the liquid call of a bird on the sandy beach and the cawing of crows in the woodland alone broke the silence of the dawn. Along the

north a band of turquoise sky reached from the sunrise point to the western woods. Out against it stood a windwheel, undecided which way to point the breeze. The zenith was massed with dark cloud which broke into red-edged fragments toward the eastern sky line.

Though three thousand sleeping folk lay in cottages upon the shores, I was as much alone in the silence of the dawning day as though in mid-ocean. The isolations of silence, how seldom do we seek and value them! Just before the activity of the day we may detach ourselves from the claims of folks and things, and learn to know the self which hides within our formal manner and conforming habit. 'Tis then that

the garb of the conventional slips away, and natural and free our spirits mount to greet the dawn. A few hours hence we may be perplexed, and tired, and angry, but now the rush of our life is stayed.

I raised the oars and motionless awaited the first ray of the sun. The last vestige of care dropped with the trickle of the water from the blades. Calmed and satisfied, I let the morning breeze bear me where it would. I had already entered the harbor of peace. Could I have kept that joy, the secret sought for ages would have been mine.

As the sun flashed red against the cottage windows on the western shore, I turned back to the pier by the eastern bluff. Rowing slowly shore-

ward, a bit of drifting weed clung to my oar, and then the soggy end of a rocket which had gone skyward the night before floated past; so was I reminded of life upon the land.

Russet Premonitions

When the sun had sunk below the hill crest I came to the road on the eastern side. It was arched with trees and sloped upward before me, not enough to weary, but enough to please in its suggestion of a wider view, with every step ahead. The Miami flowed placidly, almost lazily, along the level valley. Its water was seen occasionally through the sycamore trees that were gathered on the flat between the hill and the river.

The autumn sun had been hot, as I had followed the river road. Now, as I climbed the hillside, the shadows were cool. Above me at the crest

the golden light lingered among the trees, the last rays clinging to the leafy tops. Each tree trunk was silhouetted against the yellow west. Even the brush fringing the crest kept no secrets as the last rays of the sun glanced athwart the hilltop.

Early September has only suggestions of autumn to offer to the tramper through the woods and along the roads. A hot noon and a cool evening is one suggestion. But the russet glow in hillcrest woods at sunset is to me the surest token of the declining year. If a few leaves filter slowly through the light, it is a perfect hour. Yet the leaves falling may be lacking, and the hour suggest autumn. The real suggestions are the coolness of the air immediately

upon the disappearance of the sun, and the light that glorifies the hilltop.

The premonitions of the autumn of life are likewise the early chill and the yellow light that falls along the crest road before one takes the first step down into the valley of the sunset. Then comes the revelation of the man, to those who have not yet left the sunrise side of the hill. He stands silhouetted against the west.

Witching Pathways

The pleasures of reminiscence! Who is able to measure them? Who is able to explain the allurement of the past? Who can resist the witching music of the streams that murmur through the fields where youth went free and happy? Who falls not a-dreaming when the light clouds which floated over the blue of summer skies long ago once more float in the memory?

Some trivial thing—the rose petal falling, the bird note at evening, the smell of the morning air, the mottled shadows on the forest floor—will bring old scenes to me, and blissfully

forgetful of the present, I go bouyantly along the pathways of the past.

Is it characteristic of human nature to see the romance of the past, and not the present? Do we see the glamour of an hour gone only from a distant view? Do we hear the calling voices the other side of the hill, or behind us, or around the turning of the road? Were these things to be seen and heard when we were there, only we were too near to see and hear?

Be that as it may, this autumn morning, when the chill without has made necessary the closing of my window and a fire within, there comes to me the call of other days.

There were those winter days in another clime, not colder than this

one of early autumn here, when the blue sky and everlasting sunshine were over me as I walked the streets, and along the paths where the summer's leaves lay thick upon the hillside. Then, when the chill came after sunset, I went home to my chair before the glowing grate. After the night would come another sunny morning, when the white frost was on the leaves of the holly tree before the door, on the brick wall to the gate, on the magnolias shining green even through the white veil. Those were blessed days—tonic days—when sweet potato pone, corn bread, and hominy-grits did their work with the sunshine to make a life worth living.

To-day I go further into retro-

spect, and I can see the poppies waving in the trade winds of the Santa Clara, acres of them on either side of the road that runs the length of the valley. Anon, my hat and the wind go away together, but only to lodge among the flowers and thus bring me nearer to them. At evening the coast range lies reddened in the sunset fire, and the sound of a bell, somewhere above, floats down as sweet as a vesper from angel-land.

Another retrospect! At the corner of the two streets was the grocery, with its stand of brooms and keg of olives on the veranda. There, in the late afternoon, we used to meet, buy a few olives and crackers to munch over our books that night, and "joke" the storekeeper because they

said he intended to become a benedict soon. There were no sidewalks in that little town which snuggled at the rim of the valley against the mountain's foot. The sage bush was everywhere, interrupted only in its possession of the place by a few houses, and yards, and orange groves, upon which you would come unexpectedly, and, having passed, would wish to pass again. Everybody about the settlement seemed to have just stopped off for a night, and kept on stopping. They cleaned up a square in the bush, and lived the simple life. The College buildings and grounds were similar in their appointment and appearance. Along the paths and short cuts we went to chapel in the morning, and to some recitations,

then to dinner, then to the Bungalow to leave our books. We would study them at night, we said; just then there was too much sunshine and beauty. It lay on the mountains yonder, it ran down the valley to Pomona, and up the other side, and, wondering where it went, we followed. The call of the out-of-doors was strong upon us in those days, and nothing more than failure in recitation would result if we went tramping here and there. We so did, and from this distance I think those lessons were well missed, and we profited by being truants.

Out-door Compensations

Dead leaves and sunshine together affect one's fancy strangely. Melancholy and joyousness are united. The rustle of the dead leaves under foot, as I follow the bank of the river, causes me to think of a departed summer. But the sunshine, glinting on the water, flooding the hollow of the hills, pouring through the bare trees above me—this holds me fast in the light and joyous present.

Afield on an Autumn-Winter Day, with feet upon the leaves, and head bathed by the sunlight, is a privilege few, perhaps, realize enough to seize, and those who do

can poorly describe the pleasure therefrom; and so can only partially stimulate the disinterested ones who prefer to remain along the pavements or in the gloomy houses of the average city or town.

As with other tastes, the love for the open is a cultivated one. After its development, one wonders how he could have been satisfied by the "shut-in life." He pled fatigue, lack of time, and other excuses, but when he has grown to love the open, he finds that he is rested by going out, and saves time by being able to do better and more work when he returns. In the early winter the dead leaves hold one to the past enough for rootage, and the sunshine fills the soul with gladness, and inspires one's

thoughts for growth in the present and future.

It is a quiet afternoon, and, looking across the sun-bathed valley, it hardly seems credible that a long time must elapse before the trees and shrubs shall be clothed with verdure, and the grass grow green above the brown earth. I am ready now for spring. Why wait six long months?

As though to make my desire less intense, a vine, clinging to a leafless tree, still keeps its green against the blighting frost. Thus everywhere we turn we find compensations. These green leaves will cling here to temper the winter for me, to make less keen the sorrow for a departed summer, and less intense the longing for a coming spring.

Close Home

A new path was discovered to-day. I had gone many times along the right bank of the river, but to-day I followed the left bank, and a new path ran on before me, full of unsuspected turnings, and much more picturesque than the old one.

The joy of going where you have never been before is the joy of a discoverer. One need not travel to distant countries to have this joy. It may be had, perhaps, in the fields, adjacent to one's suburban home. Something is there awaiting someone to find it.

It is surprising what little space is necessary to put one in a new world.

SWAYING TREE TOPS

I drop down the path on the steep side of a ravine, through the tangle of undergrowth, and come upon a stream a yard wide, which gurgles over the gray stone of its bed. I feel that I am isolated in a strange country. (I have lived for months six squares away.) These little experiences teach one that the present and the near-at-hand is full of the undiscovered.

Wrestling Sycamores

The sycamores have bared their arms for the wrestle with the winter wind. There is nothing cowardly about them. They throw off their jackets at the first hint of a winter battle. From my window I can see them down by the water, bending and straining every fiber as they catch the wind and hurl it back, breathless, and moaning with its pain. I have heard it said that the trees sigh in the wind. Not a bit of it. The wind that struggles with the tree tops sighs. When it is thrown back, moaning, the sycamores gather themselves and await the new attack.

All the night through, while I am

sleeping up here on the hill top, the sycamores down by the river are battling for their lives. When I awaken in the night I hear the wind crying for quarter, but the trees are silent in their grim defiance. In the morning the wind has given up the struggle and slunk back into its caves of the north, but the sycamores stand erect—perhaps an inch taller for the struggle—with the sunshine glorifying their white tops.

All save one. To-day I found one sycamore had fallen—its great length breaking with the fall into many shattered pieces. When I examined it I discovered that it had died before it fell. Last summer lightning struck its heart. Even then its death was deliberate, and it died as a king

dies. When the storm came last night the tree had gone—only its untenanted shell remained. The victory of the wind was empty of honor.

Even now the dead shell, lying prone upon the earth, will serve a purpose. Violets will bloom sooner on the sunny side of the trunk next spring, and the defeat of the north wind will continue.

The girl who wears the violets will pick them there, and, sitting on the fallen trunk, will mass them with their leaves for her emblem of the season; while the robin will call cheerily from the fence rail, " Spring —spring—spring is here."